



Town of Groton, Connecticut

45 Fort Hill Road
Groton, CT 06340-4394
Town Clerk 860-441-6640
Town Manager
860-441-6630

Meeting Minutes

Representative Town Meeting

Moderator Jean-Claude Ambroise, Representatives Karin Adams, Scott W. Aument, Sr., Joseph Baril, Nancy E. Barnhart, Alicia Bauer, Genevieve Cerf, Susan Chase-Hildebrand, Michael Collins, Christine Conley, Susan Deane-Shinbrot, Luanne E. DeMatto, Nancy Driscoll, Dave Ferreira, Neal Gardner, Patrice Granatosky, Karen Hatcher, Keith L. Hedrick, Conrad F. Heede, Lynn Crockett Hubbard, Michael Dean Johnson, Rosanne E. Kotowski, Jim Loughlin, Jackie Massett, Bruce A. McDermott, Roscoe Merritt, Scott Newsome, Richard J. Pasqualini, Jr., Betty A. Prochaska, Pam Ryley, Jack Sebastian, Dana S. Semeraro, Richard Semeraro, Joan Steinfeld, Irma Streeter, Mark Svencer, Archie C. Swindell, Lori A. Watrous, Amanda L. Whewell and Ivy R. Williams

Wednesday, December 12, 2012

7:30 PM

Groton Senior Center

Regular Meeting

A. ROLL CALL

Moderator Jean-Claude Ambroise called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

30 members were present, and a quorum was declared.

The Moderator reported that Reps. Deane-Shinbrot, Merritt, Prochaska, Ryley, Sebastian and Streeter notified the Town Clerk of their absence.

Members Present: Moderator Ambroise, Rep. Adams, Rep. Aument, Rep. Baril, Rep. Barnhart, Rep. Chase-Hildebrand, Rep. Collins, Rep. Conley, Rep. DeMatto, Rep. Driscoll, Rep. Ferreira, Rep. Gardner, Rep. Granatosky, Rep. Hatcher, Rep. Hedrick, Rep. Heede, Rep. Hubbard, Rep. Kotowski, Rep. Loughlin, Rep. Massett, Rep. McDermott, Rep. Pasqualini Jr., Rep. D. Semeraro, Rep. R. Semeraro, Rep. Steinfeld, Rep. Svencer, Rep. Swindell, Rep. Watrous, Rep. Whewell and Rep. Williams
Members Absent: Rep. Bauer, Rep. Cerf, Rep. Deane-Shinbrot, Rep. Johnson, Rep. Merritt, Rep. Newsome, Rep. Prochaska, Rep. Ryley, Rep. Sebastian and Rep. Streeter

Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Town Clerk Betsy Moukawsher and Assistant Town Clerk Sally Whitney.

B. MOMENT OF SILENCE AND SALUTE TO THE FLAG

The members observed a moment of silence followed by the Salute to the Flag.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF OCTOBER 10, 2012 and NOVEMBER 1, 2012

A motion that the minutes be approved was made by Rep. Pasqualini, seconded by Rep. Adams.

Rep. Aument requested that the exact school enrollment figure stated by Mr. McKenna be noted in the October 10, 2012 minutes.

The Town Clerk stated that the tape would be reviewed.

The minutes were approved unanimously.

D. CITIZENS' PETITIONS

Bonnie Giesler, 25 Fort Street, suggested that the Pfizer buildings that are scheduled for demolition be used as a middle school in lieu of building a new school. She noted various reasons why this could be advantageous.

Jay Dempsey, 22 South Prospect Street, expressed concern and frustration over the lack of transparency from the City of Groton in regard to the upcoming sale of Thames Valley Communications. He noted that the current employees may be affected, and that the existing bond debt is outstanding and will continue to be a drain on Groton Utilities revenue.

E. RECEPTION OF COMMUNICATIONS

Moderator Jean-Claude Ambroise announced that Rep. Dee Harrell from District 1 has resigned. He presented a plaque to Rep. Harrell and thanked her for the many years of service and thousands of hours spent deliberating over annual Town budgets.

Rep. Harrell thanked her constituents for the support that allowed her to serve for so many years.

2012-0314 Crystal Lake Road Reconstruction Project - CIP Reallocation

CRYSTAL LAKE ROAD RECONSTRUCTION PROJECT - CIP REALLOCATION

This matter was Referred to the RTM Public Works Committee, due back on January 9, 2013.

F. REPORT OF THE TOWN MANAGER**1. Financial report**

Mr. Oefinger reported that the Fund Balance as of November 30, 2012 is approximately \$9.3 million; the General Contingency balance is \$444,400 after an approved transfer in August of \$5,600 to the Southeastern Connecticut Regional Probate Court; the Capital Reserve balance is \$1,465,300. The decrease to Capital Reserve is attributable to the Crystal Lake Road Reconstruction project that has been approved by the Town Council and referred to the RTM.

2. Monthly briefing

The Town Manager highlighted various items from the Town Manager's News. He made special note that the Town of Groton has received the Distinguished Budget Presentation Award. He stated that this is the 19th consecutive year for receiving this prestigious award. He asked members to review the Town's report on "Storm Sandy".

G. REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Moderator Ambroise reported that Dr. Ramos, the Interim Superintendent, is unable to attend due to a conflicting Board of Education meeting at which redistricting is being discussed.

H. LIAISON REPORTS**Board of Education/Town & City Councils/RTM Liaison Committee**

Rep. Watrous reported on the meeting held December 5, 2012. She reviewed the committee discussion in regard to playing fields, budget process and redistricting. She updated members on the approved Groton Education Association contract and the status of portable classrooms at Cutler and West Side Middle Schools.

I. COMMITTEE REPORTS**1. FINANCE - Chairman Granatosky**

No meeting, no report.

2. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & SERVICES - Chairman Ferreira

Chairman Ferreira read the minutes of the meeting held on December 12, 2012. (Minutes are attached to the permanent record.)

Motion to approve the minutes was made by Rep. Ferreira, seconded by Rep. Aument and so voted unanimously.

2012-0266 Connection Fund Donation

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE TOWN MANAGER TO DIRECT THE DONATION MADE BY THE CONNECTION FUND, INC. TO THE ELIHU SPICER TRUST FUND

WHEREAS, The Connection Fund, Inc., a not for profit 501(c)3 status organization that provides supporting housing to moderate and low income families, owns a number of properties in the Town of Groton, and

WHEREAS, in a letter to the Town Council, The Connection Fund, Inc. has presented a donation

in lieu of taxes to the Town of Groton in the amount of \$10,000 that has been deposited into the General Fund, and

WHEREAS, in subsequent communication with representatives of The Connection Fund, Inc. they have acknowledged that the Town is free to use the money as it sees fit, and

WHEREAS, the Director of Human Services has indicated that the Elihu Spicer Trust Fund, a long-time source of financial assistance to Groton families and individuals in need, is rapidly being exhausted due to increased client need and falling interest rates, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Town Council authorizes the transfer of the \$10,000 donation made by The Connection Fund, Inc. from the General Fund to the Elihu Spicer Fund (73200).

Refer to RTM.

A motion was made by Rep. Ferreira, seconded by Rep. Aument, that this matter be Adopted.

The motion carried unanimously

3. EDUCATION - Chairman Hedrick

No meeting, no report.

4. RECREATION - Chairman Streeter

No meeting, no report.

5. PUBLIC SAFETY - Chairman Pasqualini

No meeting, no report.

6. PUBLIC WORKS - Chairman Collins

No meeting, no report.

7. RULES & PROCEDURES - Chairman Massett

No meeting, no report.

J. BUDGET DISCUSSIONS

Rep. Kotowski addressed members with two ideas on how reductions to the budget can be achieved. She stated that the budget needs to be reduced and priorities established. She suggested that "priority-based budgeting" be considered and explained this concept. She feels this would encourage the Town to "live within its means" and force the Town to evaluate the costs and importance of specific services. She stated that many towns have embraced priority-based budgeting as a way to provide services at affordable levels while controlling spending. Her second idea is "zero-based budgeting" which is more time consuming than traditional budgeting methods. She explained this process and stated that the emphasis is not to align the current fiscal year's numbers with those of previous fiscal years, but to budget each year independently. She emphasized that it is her goal that the RTM have honest discussions about controlling spending, and distinguishing essential services from those that are nice to have.

K. OTHER BUSINESS

In response to Rep. Aument, the Town Manager noted that he has no insight into Groton Utilities or the sale of Thames Valley Communications (TVC). He noted that decisions related to TVC were made properly at City of Groton Freeman's meetings. He affirmed that it is his belief that government should be transparent and that residents need to be active and vocal in local government. He explained that the City of Groton is completely responsible for the existing bond debt incurred relating to TVC. He noted that explanations will be provided to bond rating agencies to clarify that the City and Town are two separate entities. Mr. Oefinger stated that the Town has a responsibility for annual funding of highway maintenance and lighting for the City and Groton Long Point. He noted that it is past practice to provide some funding for both the City

of Groton and Groton Long Point police departments, but this is not an obligation.

Rep. Swindell noted that transparency in government is important but, stated that there could be negative impacts on business negotiations. He does not agree with the stated value of TVC assets. He feels it would be useful to obtain more information regarding TVC, but that the sale should continue in order to prevent further revenue losses.

Moderator Ambroise noted that City Mayor Galbraith will be invited to address questions about Thames Valley Communications.

L. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn at 8:31 p.m. was made by Rep. Massett, seconded by Rep. Steinfeld and so voted unanimously.

Attest:

*Betsy Moukawsher, Town Clerk
Clerk of the RTM*

Sally A. Whitney, Assistant Town Clerk